CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

SHOWELL ROGERS

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

AND

OTHER VERSES.

Christmas Greetings

AND

OTHER VERSES

BY

SHOWELL ROGERS, M.A., LL.D.

BIRMINGHAM

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To the old friends of my husband, who have aided me in arranging this little book, and above all to Mr. Cuming Walters who has edited, the Verses and written an Appreciation, I offer my grateful thanks.

S.M.S R.

The Nook,
Edgbaston.

Christmas, 1902.

861756

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SHOWELL ROGERS, M.A., LL.D.,

Born May 26th, 1855.

Died August 17th, 1899.

AN APPRECIATION

BY

J. Cuming Walters.

PREFACE.

"We shall all be better men if, in the temple where we preserve the memories of true and kindly souls, we retain a niche for the gracious personality of Showell Rogers."—The Rev. J. H. Jowett.

THE years fleet by on such rapid wings that it is hard to realise that three have sped since Dr. Showell Rogers passed from our midst. Four Christmases have come and gone since his last message reached us. There were many who received that booklet of seasonable verse, and many who looked forward to such a gift for many Christmases to come; and these it is who mourn not only the loss of a gracious personality, but the uncompleted promise of too short a life. The memory remains of a man whom it was indeed a privilege to know as a friend; and the regret deepens that his leaf perished in the green. We can but conjecture what he might have ripened to, this ardent student, this richly-dowered soul; the inexorable Fates who, as with Lycidas, with the abhorrèd shears slit the thin-spun life, have made it impossible for the real value of his gifts to be appraised.

It is no part of my intention to write a biography of William Showell Rogers, who passed from among us on August 17th, 1899. I therefore record in the briefest terms that he was the son of an esteemed member of the Birmingham Town Council, that from his mother he inherited a

disinterested and philanthropic nature, that he distinguished himself as a scholar at King Edward's School, and that he went in due course to Cambridge University. His College life was undoubtedly a life of radiant hours, "one long holiday," and to be, however so brief a time, in the company of Showell Rogers was to learn of his love and his unfading memory of that happy time. The active part he took in the literary and social life of the University is attested by his contemporaries. In 1878, when he was twenty-three, he chose the Law as a profession, and in this case Law did not prove fatal to Literature. Whether Dr. Rogers was preparing a brief in the ordinary course of professional business, or whether he was penning an essay on "The Law in Relation to Infants," or "The Ethics of Advocacy," the literary glow illumined his phraseology, and made the dullest subject bright. He saw not only the plain prose of his daily work but the romantic glamour, and, while he was sternly practical and precise, he seemed ever able to thread a few strands of gold amid the most sombre vestments of the Law.

Nor was the inherent kindliness of his nature affected by the severities of his legal training, or by the strictly professional view which he took of things in general. Just as his mother had thrown herself warmly into the work of Rescue Societies, so Showell Rogers, solicitor, was the willing friend of helpless children; and his heart was indeed in his work when he was engaged in securing justice for a wronged innocent, or helping a fallen fellow-creature to start anew. He was closely associated with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and worked ungrudgingly, privately and professionally, to secure adequate protection for the young who were destined from birth to run the risk of neglect, contamination, poverty, and blows. Child-life was to him very precious. His love for his own little

ones was touching to witness, and in a hundred delicate, considerate, tender ways he gave proof of the wealth of love his heart contained and was ready to lavish upon them.

The *Child Story from Martial*, and that winsome, playful, last poem of all, *The Children's Paradise*, which came to us with its comical illustrations four years ago, sufficiently attest the depth of his well of love for the "children twain" to whom he told the sweet old story of Erotion. But there is other evidence, only to be casually referred to here—the evidence of those beautiful letters, now held sacred, which he was wont to send to his pets from distant lands to assure them of his hourly thoughts of all in "the happiest home in England."

Were the biographical details of Dr. Rogers's life set forth they would simply go to prove that he was a man of ideals, and that he strove to attain them, lofty as they might be. Hence his exaltation of character, his hatred of cant and sham, his scorn of wrong, his ardent sympathy, and his knightly championship of the weak and oppressed. Yet there was no taint of the "superior person" about him; he was easy, natural, a lover of light and laughter, and he possessed the grace of humour—not a "saving grace," but an added grace to a sweet and noble disposition. I think of him as a man of full heart, of well-stored mind, of pure soul. "Men of his stamp," said the Rev. J. H. Jowett at the graveside, "hold their religious hearts in strong reserve. The secret emerges, not so much as an audible confession, but in the fragrant spirituality of their lives." This was essentially the case with Dr. Rogers, and on that subject it is not fitting that more should be said here. But his constancy to ideals, his love of truth and sincerity, his adhesion to the Christian standard, can be illustrated by an extract from

his article on the *Ethics of Advocacy*. Here he had a subject of no ordinary difficulty to deal with, yet we find him writing to this conclusion :—

> "Is then the life of the advocate, which Bentham and others have drawn in colours so dark, incompatible not only with the dictates of honour and of truth, but with the first principles of morality and religion? The unblemished lives of a long array of practitioners of the law, and of the profession of advocacy, during the centuries that have elapsed from Hale and More to Cairns and Selborne—I speak not of the living, though in their ranks shining examples are not wanting—men who have walked humbly before their God, whilst learnedly and strenuously maintaining the rights and defending the interests of those whose causes they were retained to plead; men who while making their intellect the slave of their purpose, have not subdued their conscience;—the lives of such men are at once an everlasting memorial, and an overwhelming argument to demonstrate the falsity of such a contention."

We remember Showell Rogers best as an ardent lover of literature, and as a man of literary parts. He had the true poetic love of fantasy, and felt the spell of mediævalism. The reader of his verses cannot fail to note how his fancy flitted to the olden time, how he conjured up visions of the long-ago, how his spirit went back to the Golden Age, and how he found pastime, refreshment, and inspiration in ancient tradition and dusty chronicles. He was ever plucking choice flowers from the half-deserted by-paths of literature, reviving their fragrance, renewing their charms. A phrase from the *Fabliaux*, a legend from monkish times, a dainty conceit from an early rhymer, a theme from his beloved Classics—these were a constant inspiration to him. And the fragrance that he found, subtle and rare, in the pleasaunces of the old poets, was distilled anew in his own verse, and sends forth its sweetness freshly to-day. His deep love and reverence for the Christmas traditions and sentiments will

also be immediately observed. To him the season was holy as well as joyous. It brought him happiness, and that happiness he would diffuse. Hence the particular pleasure in recalling, as this little volume will recall, how he strove ever to make his Christmas a sacrament, a means of service, an inspiration to worthy deeds, high thought, and universal good-will. The season brought to him the vision of a nobler age yet to dawn—when brazen cannon should be molten to minster chimes, and

> " . . . the war of nations cease,
> Since Heaven's own armies sound the note of peace."

Charming as his poetic greetings were, it would be unfair to judge him wholly by them. Those who knew him best are aware that these waifs of rhyme were only as drops from the rich chalice of his mind, and that had his years been prolonged his songs would have streamed forth more copiously, and would have deepened in tone. He died with the best of his singing in him. He was at the beginning of his literary career, hopeful and enthusiastic—then suddenly there came silence, cessation—and we were left to think of the vast "what might have been." Useless to pule at the inexorable decree of Providence, or the law of Fate, call it which you will. Our poets, from Milton to Shelley, from Arnold to Tennyson, have sought to reconcile us to these losses, and have given us the comforting doctrine that transplanted human worth will bloom to profit otherwhere : and there we end, with bowed heads. Of Showell Rogers it can be truly said that though the thread of life was unduly shorn he had not lived in vain. His influence remains in that circle which treasures his memory and feels the stimulus of his example.

Considering the activity of his life, his literary output, which he regarded merely as the pastime of leisure hours, was not inconsiderable. Among his publications and addresses—the

choice of subjects illustrative of the character of the man—were the following :—

"Shenstone, the Laureate of the Leasowes" (1885).
"Gradgrind *versus* Psyche" (1886).
"Michael Drayton" (1887).
"Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy'" (1889).
"The Relations between Science and Poetry" (1890).
"Some Legal Aspects of English Fiction" (1890).
"The Reviewing of Verdicts of History" (1892).
"At Tennyson's Grave," and "Tennyson : A Reverie" (1892).
"The Blessedness of Books" (1893).
"Blackmore's 'Perlycross'" (1894).
"In Lakeland" (1895),
"Some Associations of a Bookshelf" (1896).
"Mountains : their Use and Abuse" (1896).
"Samuel Parr : a Warwickshire Worthy" (1899).
"On the Study of the Law Reports" (1899).
"The Ethics of Advocacy" (1899).
"Pioneers of the Peaks" (August 15th, 1899).

I set forth the last, although it was but a two-column review of Mr. Gribble's volume on early mountaineers, because this article marked *Finis* to Showell Rogers's literary career, and appeared but two days before his death. During the last years of his life he had been filled with the passion for scaling heights, and triumphing over Nature's obstacles among the mighty hills. The last long conversation I had with him was on this subject; the last pamphlet he placed in my hands was a record of a memorable journey to Cumberland, and the successful ascent of one of the most difficult summits; and among his last compositions was the dainty verse, casket-like holding its little jewel of thought—

To a Welsh Mountain.

A twofold gift is thine : one, bought and sold;
The other, free, a simple boon but blest;
The Hand that filled thy secret veins with gold
Hath set the violets on thine open breast.*

*The verse, slightly altered, will be found in *Scrip and Scrippage* (page 88).

The poems in this volume consist exclusively of the Christmas Messages, but they are not the only compositions in verse which would be available if required. There is one strange poem, not included here, entitled *Strivings*, and in weird phrasings, not unworthy of Shelley himself in his most mystic mood, the details are given of a dream which portended blast in heaven, and blight and ruin on earth. The lines are powerful even to the verge of exaggeration; but they end abruptly in

---

A friend (C. A. V.) had re-cast the lines in Latin thus—

Sunt geminae tibi, mons, merces; magni altera venit;
Hanc inopi dono, mons generose, dabis,
Qui caecas auro venas ditaverat, idem
In patulo violas iussit inesse sinu.

ALTERA VERSIO.

Sinis divitiis opimus exstas;
Mercatoribus has geris petendas,
Has cuivis dare gratiis invabit.
Auro qui deus intimas replevit
Venas Attalico, benignus idem
Ditavit violis sinum patentem.

This was not the only occasion on which Dr. Rogers's lines had the honour of a classic translation. The very touching poem in *Scrip and Scrippage* (page 80) in which he seems to have shown some foreknowledge, or to have had a premonition, of the impending voyage to "Lethe Wharf," was rendered in Latin by another friend (W. S. Y.), and the last six lines of this version ("If but the pressure of thy hand," etc.) may be reproduced—

Quum, tandem, suprema dies mihi venerit, atque,
Me capiet "Stygii lurida cymba senis";
Quamvis exanimi desint in corpore sensus,
O, utinam liceat te meminisse mihi!
Tunc, risum si, cara, tuum revocare daretur,
Contactumque manus, satque superque foret.

order that the poet may tell of his awakening, and in changed, simple language relate that

> " . . . A healing influence fell
> Around the place, and lifting awestruck lids
> I rose from off the earth as one who wakes
> From out a deathly trance. And the sweet stars
> Were keeping their appointed watch in Heaven,
> And moonbeams, slanting through the beechen copse,
> Showed mild-eyed kine at rest beneath the trees
> That glimmered silvern on the uplands dim
> In peaceful shadow. So with trembling hand
> I wiped the damps of fear from off my brow,
> And shook the night-dews from my garments, ere
> I sought the haunts of men with will renewed,
> And soul attuned to Truth's deep harmonies,
> New-nerved to climb stern Duty's steepest path."

This bravery of soul, this devotion to duty, this inspiration to work derived from all that was sweet and beautiful in Nature, once more reveal the prevailing characteristics of the man. His heart's affections may have been set elsewhere, but he never swerved from the day's task, and he laboured with a will. He loved books, and he was a true poet, but he

> " . . left no calling for this idle trade,
> No duty broke"—

though no doubt he entered a demurrer, in secret, to Pope's contemptuous reference to the sacred Muse.

Two of his happiest efforts in the way of addresses were on his beloved books. One, which I heard him deliver with evident self-enjoyment, he whimsically called "The Pursuits of the Book Collector and the Spoils of the Chase," and it treated of the treasures he had acquired for his library—from rare editions of the classics to a housekeeping book of Boswell's. The second was on "The Blessedness of Books"—the blessedness of acquiring them, the blessedness of living with them, the blessedness of reading them, "with a few words, to end with, on the pain of parting with them and from them." "Happy the man," he said,

"who has in his house a library or quiet room into which he may enter, as into a magician's chamber, if only for a single hour a day, and there, it may be after the rest of the house has retired, summon up master-spirits from the vasty deep of literature, spirits that will not fail to come at his bidding."

His longest prose contribution to current literature was an exhaustive history of Dr. Samuel Parr, of Hatton, "a Warwickshire Worthy." As was invariably the case with Showell Rogers, once he had taken up a subject he became an enthusiast upon it. No research was too laborious to be undertaken if there were a chance of obtaining one more grain of gold; and he wrote and re-wrote, investigated, read, and saturated himself with facts, until he felt that he could completely perform his self-assigned task. The essay on Dr. Parr left little for others to do. If anyone could have re-created interest in the forgotten worthy it was Dr. Rogers himself, and even now, when I read this story of a quaint, erudite, out-of-date celebrity, I wonder why the world has been content to forget him. In Dr. Rogers's pages he reappears with a glamour which fascinates, and the enthusiasm of his eulogist is infectious.

In 1895, a memorable visit to Wordsworth's Lakeland home set Dr. Rogers to work upon an equally sympathetic chronicle of his reverent pilgrimage, for it was indeed in a reverent spirit that he betook himself to these literary shrines. And on returning he was able, he wrote, to say within his heart as he bent over his desk in a dull city office—

> "Oft, in the city's throng,
> I feel the gladness of the streams,
> That, crossed by shades and sunny gleams,
> Water the green land of dreams—
> The golden land of song."

After the pilgrimages came the mountaineering, and then—the

sudden end, the parting from all he loved, the living, and his books. For his thought had dwelt on this.

> "At the call of Death [wrote this lover of books] we must part from our volumes as from our other earthly possessions. Whether the mental riches which they have enabled us to acquire in our lifetime will then likewise vanish away, we know not. It may be that in the future state all good knowledge that we have gained here will be preserved to us as part of the celestial joys."

There was a magnetism in this man which not only drew one towards him irresistibly, but seemed also to draw forth the good in one's own nature. Lowell has told us in an imperishable sonnet that the nobleness that lies in other men, sleeping but never dead, will rise in majesty to meet our own: so seemed it with Showell Rogers. He revealed to others the better part of their nature by displaying the nobility of his own. "Star vibrates to star." A dignified, commanding man, with just a hint of reserve in his manner, he at first struck a stranger as being slightly aloof; but this quickly vanished as the sunny nature shone forth, and the eye softened, and the ripple of laughter added melody to speech. And, with his simplicity, his unaffectedness, his joy in life, his tenderness, he was none the less a manly man. Never was true bravery—the bravery of the soldier advancing at the word of command—more calmly and more strikingly displayed than when he fronted Death. Had he not, in one of his latest poems, taught us how to

> " . . . face the dark, with loins and feet
> Girded and shod"?—

and had he not dwelt with love and tenderness on the time when he should

> " . . . come to stand
> On Lethe Wharf"?

I think, when looking through these poems, that Showell Rogers had had premonitions of the early close of his life, and had schooled himself to heroism. His last booklet, his *Scrip and*

Scrippage, seems now, in this later light of knowledge, to be a valediction; and we, who know how delightful was his home-life, can picture him waiting on the "unwelcome strand" until the time comes for that re-union which he had dreamed of as the divinest boon. "Girded and shod" for the duties of life which called to him for fulfilment, he was also "girded and shod" when

> "Death came knocking at the door
> Of Life, to say the play was o'er,
> And festal lights died in the street."

I recall vividly, and with a pang, that beautiful sunlit day when a group of friends stood round the open grave, and heard the tribute which fell from the lips of one whose natural eloquence was intensified by personal feeling and poignant sorrow. A few of the words uttered that day linger in the memory now—

> "His great endowment did not make him exclusive. His passion for literature, for the best and purest of literature, his intimacy with the greatest minds, kept him sensitive and sympathetic. There was the flavour of refinement about all his intercourse. . . . . He retained the sense of the beautiful, he never lost his veneration for it: and truth was as winsome and alluring in the law courts as she was in the secret tribunal of his own conscience. He exalted his profession, and his profession acted as a chastening ministry upon his own life. . . . He believed in God."

When the call came, and Showell Rogers responded with "*Adsum*," we can well believe, knowing the whiteness of his record, the excellence of his life, that in the fullest sense one of his aspirations had been fulfilled:

> "For me, when life and I shall part,
> I'd leave it with a schoolboy's heart."

So I may close, with a wise and noble saying which he himself loved much, and quoted often—

> "Above all, believe it, the sweetest canticle is *Nunc Dimittis*, when a man hath obtained worthy ends and expectations."

Christmas, 1902.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

AND

OTHER VERSES.

"RING OUT THE OLD:
RING IN THE NEW."

"RING OUT THE OLD: RING IN THE NEW."

I.

IN a belfry gray on a moorland white,
On the verge of a wintry sea,
The long last stroke of the year is rung;
And a bell, in rayless shadow swung,
High in the mist and driving hail,—
As a knell of doom the night-winds wail,
And the storm wrack rolls
On the iron rocks,—
Its message tolls
In solemn shocks:
"Nox Nox!" "Nox Nox!"
"Nox!"
"The night cometh."
And the mariner sighs on the wintry sea,
And the shepherd on snowy wold.

II.

The passing bell of the dying year
Ceases. A flood of light
From the mist-free moon and watching stars,
Slanting athwart the ivied bars,
As the beams fall full on the bell's broad rim,
Its legend shines in the belfry dim:
In music golden,
The bell rings down
Its legend olden
To the waiting town:
"Fiat Lux," "Fiat Lux," "Fiat Lux,"
"Lux," "Lux."
"Let there be light."
And the mariner sings on the wintry sea,
And the shepherd on snowy wold;
For the night is past, and the shadows flee
At the dawn of the Eastern gold.

Christmas, 1885.

"HORAS NON NUMERO NISI
SERENAS."

"Horas non numero nisi serenas."

(Motto on an old Sundial.)

I.

IN thymy garden walled around,
Its pathways trimly edged with box,
And drowsy with the summer sound
Of murmuring bees in hollyhocks,
Stands, bleached by twice two centuries' suns
And snows, a dial lichen-grown,
Whose motto quaintly carven runs:—
"I count ye sunnie howres alone."

II.

Such the fair dream of vanished June
That comes to cheer these winter days,
When half the world seems out of tune,
And all the golds are turned to grays;
But other visions I command
To-night, as in my fire I see
The glimmering vales of faeryland
With half-closed eyes of reverie.

III.

A land where nought that's sordid lives,
And weary cares no more oppress;
A realm of rare superlatives,
Where all is sunny blessedness.

IV.

While thus in dreamy trance I go
Beside the surge of airy seas,
Pluck apples ruddy with the glow
Born in the far Hesperides,
I start and wake; the night-wind sighs,
My lessening tapers dimly burn,
In ashes dull the fire-light dies,
And chill and comfortless I turn,

V.

And, loosed from Fancy's magic spell,
Come back into the world again;
And, leaving meads of asphodel,
Peer through the casement's darkened pane.
The garden sleeps in silence drear,
Till o'er the Eastern hills there glows
The gold dawn of the coming year
Far seen across the Christmas snows.

VI.

As the herald beams of quickening day
Stream bright upon the crumbling stone,
I echo the words of the dial gray:—
"I count ye sunnie howres alone."

Christmas, 1886.

"NUNC MEA, MOX HUIUS, SED
POSTEA NESCIO CUIUS."

"I have often felt," said Inglesant, "that old dance music has an inexpressible pathos; as I listen to it I seem to be present at long-past festivities, whose very haunts are swept away and forgotten; at evenings in the distant past, looked forward to as all important, upon whose short and fleeting hours the hopes and enjoyments of a lifetime were staked, now lost in an undistinguished oblivion and dust of death. The young and the beautiful, who danced to these quaint measures, in a year or two had passed away, and other forms equally graceful took their place. Fancies and figures that live in sound, and pass before the eyes only when evoked by such melodies, float down the shadowy way and pass into the future, where other gay and brilliant hours await the young, to be followed, as heretofore, by pale and disappointed hopes and sad realities, and the grave."

JOHN INGLESANT.—Chap. XXV.

"Nunc mea, mox huius, sed postea nescio cuius."

(House motto on an old lintel.)

A MOATED grange, where guests unite
To bid the parting year good night
With dance and song. The logs of Yule
Blaze bright, and many a ruddy gule—
The chequering firelight's heraldry—
In the old hall falls fitfully
On oaken panel, floor, and beam
In raftered roof with rippling gleam;
And all is jollity within.
Without, pale mists, and spectre-thin,
Slow o'er the water-meadows float;
The night-owl shrieks, and in the moat,
Still as a shadow 'neath a spell,
The heron standeth sentinel.
The dark elms' ghostly tracery
Stands etched upon the frosty sky;
And—subtle witchery of night—
Fantastic shapes wave in the light.
More potency the wizard moon
Than grosser glories of high noon,
Or tender half-lights of the day
Just ere it dies, and night hath sway.

The viols cease, the dance is done,
The last late lingering guest is gone:
Low burns the lamp, and red the gleed,
But ere I seek my rest, I read
The chapter in "John Inglesant"
That tells of figures habitant
In sound, as in an element.
And as I follow fancy's bent—
The old dance music in my ears—
There rise the forms of other years.
Before me pass in brave array
The dancers of an elder day;
Dim beckoning hands wave through the glooms,
Of shapes that people empty rooms.
Fair damsels dead and gone I see
Bend in the old-world courtesy,
And shadowy cavaliers renew
Their long-untrodden *pas-de-deux;*
While in the faded hangings dance
The knights and dames of old romance.
From tall time-blackened frames descend,
And with the shadowy dancers blend,
Ruff of Elizabeth, hoop of Anne,
Haughty dame, and serving-man,
Fan, farthingale, and furbelow,
With bucks and blades of long ago,
Doublet slashed, and pointed shoe,

Sword, and patch, and powdered queue.
Now harpsichord, and quaint spinet,
Lead saraband and minuet,
The stately measures of old France,
Cotillon, gigue, and contredanse,
And gay gavotte.

Then next appears
The mystery of on-coming years;
Processions of the Future's dead
The long dim-lighted galleries tread.
The Past, the Present, and To Be
Blend in that spectral company
In medley strange. So through my brain
There whirls the mazy thronging train,
Till on a sudden, all the scene
Changes, and is as it had been.
For, in a trice, each cavalier
Steps to his place of many a year;
Dead ladies of the buried past
Back to their arras rustle fast;
Lest morning's earliest streak of red
On tapestries untenanted,
And frames deserted on the wall
With wondering ray should strangely fall.

And so they pass: fair dame and beau,
Actors in Life's fast-fleeting show.

They played their parts, as in a mime,
And crowd the corridors of Time.
Thus I, enwrapped in fancy's wings,
Revolve the passingness of things,
And muse how each ancestral hall
Soon to another's lot shall fall;
And, while I dream, the old year dies,
The coming year mounts up the skies;
And, as the gray dawn slowly breaks,
The mantel's carven motto speaks:—

"To-daie 'tis I, to-morrowe, hee,
I wis nottie who in daies to bee."

Christmas, 1887.

JUVENILIA.

JUVENILIA.

. . . . . "*It is most sweet to muse*
Upon the days gone by: to act in thought
Past seasons o'er, and be again a child."

CHARLES LAMB.

TWO thousand years twice rolled away
Ere Earth beheld a Christmas Day:
What could be drearer
To prehistoric girls and boys
Than holidays without the joys
That mark our era?
Nought knew they in that ancient time
Of Christmas ghosts and pantomime.

I wonder if, to Santa Claus,—
A myth, you know, by modern laws—
Time past beholden,
Young Enoch hung his stocking up,
Methuselah 'neath his breakfast cup
Found coins all golden,
With regal image and imprint,
Fresh from the Canaanitish mint.

In Christmas days a truce I cry
To history and philosophy,
Shun Mill and Morley;
Vote Herbert Spencer deadly dull,
Nor flowers of rhetoric care to cull
From Lord Macaulay;
Away with Gibbon, banish Bain,
And try to be a boy again.

I then, though childhood's days are done,
Take down *The Thousand Nights and One*,—
Enchanted stories;—
Drink in anew, with boyish zest,
Here in the dull and wintry West,
Their Eastern glories;
A middle-aged believer in
Genie, magician, ghoul, and djinn!

Ah, what a brave array is there,
Prince, Vizier, Caliph, Calender,
And beauteous ladies,
And caves of wealth that never fails:—
O what a wondrous Queen of Tales
Scheherazade is!—
What potent spells grim care to ban
Aladdin, Camaralzaman!

Again I trace with fresh delight
The wanderings of La Mancha's knight,
And Sancho Panza;
Fair Dulcinea ne'er shall fade,
And Rozinante, sorry jade,
Outruns *my* stanza;
With lance atilt at windmills well met,
The Don rides 'neath Mambrino's helmet.

The tale of Crusoe's island, boat,
Companion parrot, dog and goat,
And faithful Friday,
Dear fictions, closest kin to truth,
Will long outlive, in veriest sooth,
Both your and my day;
When books that proudlier bid for fame
Are vanished and an unknown name.

To-day, in spite of manhood's years,
I own that Marryat's privateers,
And sea fights breezy,
And Peter Simple, jolly tar,
Delight me still, and jollier far,
Midshipman Easy;
And, schoolboy-like, I cannot skip
One chapter of *The Phantom Ship.*

If, blest beyond the lot of men,
I reach my fourscore years and ten,
I still would fain read
Of Indian trails, and bushmen's ways,
Scalps gory, prairies all ablaze,
In Captain Mayne Reid;
And long to trap the bear and skunk,
And live on pemmican and junk.

Bold pirates of the Spanish Main,
'Mid isles of palm and sugar cane,
Far in the tropics;
Rich galleons freighted with doubloons
Deep sunk in coral-reefed lagoons,
(And kindred topics);
Of joys like these I find a mine
In Kingston and in Ballantyne.

Nor would I in my meed of praise
To craftsmen of these latter days
Be one whit laggard;
The lamp still bright is handed on
By Robert Louis Stevenson
And Rider Haggard.
And *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *She*,*
Shall e'er command my heart and me.

* . . . . "*That not impossible She,*
That shall command my heart and me."
RICHARD CRASHAW, *circa* 1615-1650.

Stern critics, with disdainful looks,
My schoolboy tastes, and schoolboy books
May scorn, derisive;
An't please them, let them work their will,
And Culture's latest rules instil,
And hold decisive:
For me, when life and I shall part,
I'd leave it with a schoolboy's heart.

Christmas, 1888.

"DUM SERVANT OVES,
INVENERUNT AGNUM DEI."

"Dum servant oves, invenerunt Agnum Dei."

ST. JEROME.

FROM sunrise slopes to sunset seas,
In snows that chill, on sands that burn,
Nor least from homes on English leas,
The waking thoughts of all men turn
To that fair land of Christ; the town
Built on the green plain's stony hem;
The dim Judæan hills that crown
The clustering roofs of Bethlehem,

White in the starlight. But no more
The beacon glory flames afar:
A score of centuries nigh are o'er,
Since first shone out the Eastern star;
What time the shepherds on the wold
Their vigil kept, the hillside trod:
They watched the flock within the fold,
And watching, found the Lamb of God.

This fancy quaint I lately found,
Fresh-blossoming like a Christmas rose,
Set in the hard and arid ground
Of Jerome's dusty folios.
"A saint's conceit," says one, "the mere
"Chance fancy of a scholar's brain."
Who wiselier reads, with insight clear,
A deeper sense may haply gain.

Christmas, 1890.

THEOCRITUS AT CHRISTMAS.

"*He calls you where the good winds blow,*
And the unchanging meadows are."

W. E. HENLEY.

" . . . . . *Arva beata,*
Petamus arva, divites et insulas."

HOR. EPOD. XVI., 41.

THEOCRITUS AT CHRISTMAS.

And the poet slept, and as he slept he dream'd, and dreaming pray'd. And his prayer was in this wise: That the gods would preserve unto him his unforgotten Greek; till that kind Death should his eyelids close, and take away his singing robes.

UNREFRESHED by modern pages
Tired book-faring wanderers seek—
Backward glancing down the ages—
The treasure-trove of golden Greek.
Like some softly-whispering breeze,
Borne o'er summer-scented seas,
Thy living music comes to us,
Dear Poet, dead Theocritus.

Thou knew'st the day-break in the glade,
Where shy nymphs flash'd by beechen lawns;
The haunts where secret dryads play'd
In oaken glens, with shaggy fauns;
And breezy uplands, where god Pan,
Watching the far-off fisherman,
Saw Galatea's tresses gleam,
Before the grot of Polypheme.

Cool fountains, falling from the rock,
Refresh the meads where shepherds lie,
Forgetful of the listening flock,
Fluting in rustic rivalry:
While Daphnis and Menalcas make
Blithe music in the myrtle brake,
Singing, and shepherding their sheep
Toward the blue Sicilian deep.

The drowsy hum of noontide heats
Sleeps in thy song; cicalas stay
Their lulling drone; the sun-god beats
Thro' latticed vines with fiercest ray.
Then murmurous dusk of summer eves,
When reapers bind their yellow sheaves,
Aflame with poppies red as gore,
And ready for the threshing floor.

Anon we see thee watching late
The olive garden's moonlit close,
Beyond the Syracusan gate,
Where lorn Simaetha pours her woes;
Invoking from her Lady Moon,
With magic herbs, a horrid boon,
To bind her Delphis in a spell
Woven with incantation fell.

Thou sangest in that far-off time
When songs were simple, singers few;
The budding earth's fresh morning prime:
O'er all the dew of song was new.
And still thou'rt singing, as of old;
And cheerly in our winter's cold
Do thy sweet numbers breathe of spring's
Tenderest vague imaginings.

From thy fair isle of long ago,
The light that shone upon thy face
Still suns thy verse: 'tis thus we know
The secret of thine idylls' grace.
To-day thy shepherds pipe as clear
As if thou sang'st but yester-year;
Tho' parted by dividing seas
And more than twenty centuries.

Such sunshine from thine isle we prize.
Thou makest, with thy minstrelsy,
Beneath these dull rain-ridden skies,
Midsummer by our Northern sea.
Tho' fallen on these latter days,
When men walk in far other ways,
Some still with thee in fancy go
Where arbutus and tamarisk blow.

If Yule snows seem to melt to May,
  What wonder—when anew are sung
These idylls of thine elder day
  New-breath'd when all the world was young?
So, Poet, on this Christmas Day,
I con thy sunny southern lay,
  And dream I'm wandering with thee
  In thy Sicilian Arcady.

Thy strains win for me sweet surcease,
  Tho' all too brief, from toil and strife;
Bring back the golden days of peace,
  When one long holiday was life.
Be these my joys, I crave no more,
Till all book-faring quests be o'er;
  And, like thee, Poet, whom I sing,
  I make an end of voyaging.

Christmas, 1892.

NOTES.

THEOCRITUS, the creator of Greek bucolic poetry, was probably born about 315 B.C., and was a native of Syracuse. He visited the city of Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy Soter, where he gained fame as a poet. His thirty poems, known as *Idylls, i.e.*, little pictures of common life, for the most part depict the simplicity of the pastoral life of Sicily. "One can well conceive the delight which his Idylls must have given to "those dusty Alexandrians, pent up for ever between sea and sand-hills, "drinking the tank-water, and never hearing the sound of a running stream; "whirling, too, for ever in all the bustle and intrigue of a great commercial "and literary city. Refreshing indeed it must have been to them to hear "of those simple joys and simple sorrows of the Sicilian shepherd, in a land "where toil was but exercise, and where existence was enjoyment. To "them and to us also. I believe Theocritus is one of the poets who will "never die."—KINGSLEY, *Alexandria and her Schools.—(Lect. ii. p. 45.)*

Galatea . . . Polypheme See THEOCRITUS, *Idyl* xi., Edit. Ahrens.

Daphnis and Menalcas . . See THEOCRITUS, *Idyl* viii., 56-59, and *Idyl* ix.

Simaetha . . . . Delphis. See THEOCRITUS, *Idyl* ii.—Simaetha, madly in love with Delphis, who has forsaken her, endeavours to subdue him to her by magic, and by invoking the moon, in her character of Hecate, and of Selene. She vows vengeance if her magic arts are unsuccessful. "Ideas change so little among the Greek country people, and the hold of "superstition is so strong, that betrayed girls even now sing to the moon "their prayer for pity and help."—A. LANG'S Essay, *Theocritus and his Age*, p. xvii., quoting a fragment, from the collection of M. Fauriel, *Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne*, which is still chanted as an incantation in the moonlit nights of Greece.

" . . . . . *Dulcia linquimus arva.*"

VIRG. ECL. i. 3.

BALLADE OF THE GOOD TIME PAST.

"*Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques.*"

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER.

Now is To-morrow's Yesterday.

Ballade of the Good Time Past.

"Le joyeulx temps passé souloit estre occasion que je faisoie de plaisants diz et gracieuses chansonettes et ballades."

LE ROMANT DE TROILUS.

LONG ages ere the world grew old,
Tho' blest by boon Earth's virgin prime,
Men mourn'd a vanisht age of gold—
Meadows more fair, a sunnier clime,
Where gods with men on beds of thyme
Sang vine-crown'd all the summer day—
And sigh'd, with envy kin to crime,
"O for 'le joyeulx temps passé!'"

What page soe'er Time may unfold,
What heights soever men may climb,
This old-world story will be told:
At war with saurians in the slime,
Or whelm'd in deeps of Thought sublime:
This is the burden of their lay,
Of preacher, poet, clown, and mime,
"O for 'le joyeulx temps passé!'"

Stars brighter shine for winter's cold,
The snowdrop smiles tho' chill with rime;
The patient violets 'neath the mould
Bide the true kiss of sure springtime;
A thrush is singing in the lime
This Christmas, blithely as in May:
Why sigh, to mar the sweet bells' chime,
"O for 'le joyeulx temps passé!'"

ENVOY.

Friend, ours will be the "good old time"
In Yules to come; and men will say—
When prose, perchance, has conquer'd rhyme—
"O for 'le joyeulx temps passé!'"

Christmas, 1893.

" *Vingt ans, trente ans: cela duroit un monde*
Au bon vieulx temps."

CLÉMENT MAROT
(1497-1544).

A TRIO OF CHRISTMAS SONNETS.

"Eja, mea anima,
Bethlehem eamus."

MAUBURNUS
(1460-1502).

"*Et subito facta est cum angelo multitudo militiæ cœlestis laudantium Deum et dicentium,*

'*Gloria in altissimis Deo,*

Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.'"

S. Lucæ, Cap. ii., vv. 13-14.

"*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the soldiery of Heaven, praising God and saying,*

'*Glory to God in the highest,*

And on earth peace to men of good will.'"

St. Luke, Chap. ii., vv. 13-14.

A TRIO OF CHRISTMAS SONNETS.

I.

WIDE o'er the world, beneath the Roman's sway,
Fair peace had reigned; thrice, cankering rust had sealed
The gates of Janus' temple; city and field
Unravaged by the imperial legions lay.
As, ere the first flush of the dawning day,
Earth throbbed expectant of the great Event.
Then, on a night, when shepherds watched intent
Judæan sheepfolds, clad in war's array,

There flashed from Heaven upon their awe-struck eyes,
Their simple souls in rapt amazement lost,
In serried ranks the armies of the skies.
No ruin red proclaim the embattled host;
But with this strange sweet song the skies they fill—
"Peace in all lands among men of good will."

II.

IN crowded courtyard of the Syrian inn
Rough-cradled lay the infant Lord of Life;
And thronging travellers stilled their sordid strife,
Hushed was the caravanserai's nightly din.
Mystic the birth: of mystic origin,
In the clear East the blazing meteor burned
With radiance mild, as men adoring turned
To that bright Babe, confessed Him pure of sin,

And knelt and worshipped. Then the star-led Kings,
Chaldæan mages, lay their tribute down,
Frankincense, myrrh, rich store of wondrous things.
With homage high three Kings the Infant crown,
And camel, ox, and ass, from field and stall,
Before their Lord in adoration fall.

III.

AND still, men say, in English barn and byre
On Christmas Eve dumb creatures kneel and pray,
Remembering Bethlehem's manger far away,
While folk in hall and grange sit round the fire.
Shall twice ten centuries pass ere man shall tire
Of strife with man, tho' angels in the height
And lowly beasts in humble praise unite?
Faint grows the hymning of the heavenly quire

In our dull ears; and yet, a nobler age
Shall dawn—when brazen cannon roar no more,
Molten to minster chimes, the knell of rage
From orient seas to farthest western shore—
And make on earth the war of nations cease,
Since Heaven's own armies sound the note of peace.

Christmas, 1894.

NOTES.

I.

"*Fair Peace had reigned.*" . . . .

"At the birth of which child, there was an universal peace through all the world. For then it was, that Augustus Cæsar, having composed all the wars of the world, did, the third time, cause the gates of Janus's temple to be shut; and this peace continued for twelve years, even till the extreme old age of the prince, until rust had sealed the temple doors. . . . For He that was born was the Prince of Peace."—Bp. Jeremy Taylor, *The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—(Part i., sect. iv., 3.)—Cf.* Hor. *Od. iv., 15.*

II.

"*And camel, ox, and ass.*" . . . .

"Puer natus in Bethlehem,
Unde gaudet Jerusalem.

Hic iacet in praesepio
Qui regnat sine termino.

Cognovit bos et asinus
Quod puer erat Dominus."

Pistor, *De Nativ. Dom., circ., 1414-1418.*

III.

"*Dumb creatures kneel and pray.*" . . . .

"A superstitious notion prevails in the western parts of Devonshire, that at twelve o'clock at night on Christmas Eve, the oxen in their stalls are always found upon their knees, as in an attitude of devotion; and that (which is still more singular) since the alteration of the stile, they continue to do this only on the Eve of old Christmas Day. . . . . There is an old print of the Nativity, in which the oxen in the stable, near the Virgin and Child, are represented upon their knees, as in a suppliant posture."—BRAND & ELLIS, *Observations on Popular Antiquities.—(Ed. 1813, i. 354 n.)*

A similar superstition prevails in the north of England, and in the northern countries of Europe. It is curious to observe that while in the English tradition the animals kneel, in the Continental they rise up and stand. The distinction is probably due to the difference in the attitudes of devotion customary in the different countries.

A CHRISTMAS TROUVAILLE.

A CHRISTMAS TROUVAILLE.

> *"All passes. ART alone*
> *Enduring stays to us;*
> *The Bust out-lasts the throne,—*
> *The Coin, Tiberius."*
>
> AUSTIN DOBSON, '*Ars Victrix.*'

THIS undecipherable, queer O
Might mean Otho, may mean Nero,—
The doubt's delightful;—
Or perhaps the O's an A, and these are
The coinage of Augustus Cæsar:
The jar was quite full.
Will some kind connoisseur assist?
I'm nought as a numismatist.

Whose image, superscription, this—
Encrusted o'er with verdigris?
—Thought, strange as any!
You, lying in my open hand,
Heard, may be, the Divine command:—
"Shew me a penny!"
How clear to-day the answer rings,—
"Render to Cæsar Cæsar's things."

When first you left the imperial mint,
Did Horace see you freshly glint?
Fine pleasure-seeker.
You helped to buy—so I incline
To think (Why not?)—his Sabine wine,
In modest beaker,—
Falernian not for such as he—
Perhaps a rose for Lalage.

I see you, tossed for heads or tails,—
On points like these how History fails!—
Beside the Forum.
O tempora! O mores!—(How
Deplore—since boys were then as now—
The indecorum
Of urchins, gambling on the floor,
By Vesta's holy temple door?)

When the dread tyrant woke his lyre's
Mad strains, and watched his impious fires
Consume the city;
The red glare, may be, caught your face
With blushes at so sore disgrace;
And—oh! the pity!
You saw Rome blaze, a fiery line
From Pincian Hill to Palatine.

Perhaps you're this, perhaps you're that;
Perhaps "*Bis dat, qui cito dat*"
Was first of you said.
You're not unique; and yet, I may
Venture to hint, the words to-day
Can be of few said.
I wonder if in ancient Rome,
Charity mostly stopped at home.

Were you by some dead Roman laid,
For Charon's fare!—Good, honest, shade!
And yet,—'tis funny!
Since I, to-day, now hold you here;
The Stygian ferryman, I fear,
Ne'er got his money;
Altho' his ghost he's ferried o'er
To (Mr. Poe's) "Plutonian shore"!

And so for centuries you've lain
Hid in my garden, where no rain
Nor sun has found you;
Undreamed of, far from all our strife,
And yet so near the hurrying life
Above, around you;
Until the gardener turned you up,
Said you were "rubbidge in a cup!"

What antique Time had spared, his spade,
By one dull stroke, a ruin made—
Unconscious Vandal!
Uninjured, luckily, you are;
Tho' a few potsherds now your jar,
And broken handle.
Man's doomed his fellow's hopes to shatter;
The gardener thought it didn't matter.

Who bore you to this land of mist,
From glowing skies of amethyst,
And hid you under
Our little nook of English ground,—
Far from the flaming mountain's sound,
And earthquake thunder,—
Where cheek by jowl the imperial brains
Were rattled by the passing trains? *

Ah! well! you've served me for a rhyme:
And since o'er your dim past old Time
Has drawn his curtain;
No more I'll let my fancy flow.
I'll only say that this I know—
And that for certain—
Buried beneath my hollyhocks
You never were —— a Christmas Box!

Christmas, 1895.

*The garden at "The Nook" extended to a railway cutting—a prose fact which explains the poetic fancy.

A CHILD STORY FROM MARTIAL.

"*Parvus et magnus ibi sunt: et servus liber a domino suo.*"

Job iii., 19.

PROEM.

BRILLIANT wit, and keen satirist as he was, it must be confessed that the Roman poet Martial (A.D. 43—104), is not a writer "virginibus puerisque." Even Lord Byron was constrained to exclaim:

> *"And then, what proper person can be partial*
> *To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?"*

But in two at least of his pieces (Lib. v. Epig. xxxiv. & xxxvii.) he deviates into poetry not only of graceful fancy, but of pure and delicate beauty. The elegance and pathos of his elegies on Erotion—a fanciful, diminutive, pet name of Greek origin, untranslatable in one word, but meaning "My little Love"—are perhaps unsurpassed in the whole range of classical literature.

Erotion was a favourite little slave-girl, the poet's property as well as his pet, who, by Fate's cruel decree, died in her sixth year:

> *"Quam pessimorum lex amara fatorum*
> *Sexta peregit hieme, nec tamen tota."*

Had she lived but six days more she would have seen six winters, or summers, as we should say:

> *"Impletura fuit sextæ modo frigora brumæ,*
> *Vixisset totidem ni minus illa dies."*

Her parents, Fronto and Flaccilla, were both slaves, and died leaving her an orphan slave-child. The poet, on her

death, and while her ashes are still warm from the funeral pyre—

"*Adhuc recenti tepet Erotion busto,*"—

addresses the father and mother in the shades, and commends to their care and keeping their—and his—little one, who has not been long in following them to the under-world; so that, protected by them, she may not shudder at the dark ghosts, and the terrific jaws of the triple-headed hell-hound Cerberus:

"*Parvula ne nigras horrescat Erotion umbras,*
Oraque Tartarei prodigiosa canis."

Finally, in an elegiac couplet of exquisite pathos, the poet prays Earth to press lightly on her tender frame; for she had never set a heavy footprint upon it:

"*Mollia non rigidus cespes tegat ossa, nec illi*
Terra gravis fueris: non fuit illa tibi."

The Roman poet's pathetic memorials form the motif of the following verses. Beyond one or two lines, they do not profess to be a translation, or even a paraphrase, of the original, from which, indeed, they differ in material respects. The spirit alone has been sought to be presented.

A CHILD STORY FROM MARTIAL.

"*One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.*"
TROILUS & CRESSIDA, Act. iii. Sc. 3.

ROMAN Martial, in thy pages
Wandering idly yester-eve—
Where thy ribald satire rages,
Jests unchastened foully thrive—
Unawares I chanced to find
Tokens of a gentler mind.

Poet, still thy song of sorrow
For a little maiden dead
Moves the heart: "*The sun to-morrow*
Will not kiss her flaxen head.
Sunsets six more had she seen
Six years old would she have been.

As now she nears the sunless land,
Ere her ashes here be cold,
O take her, father, by the hand;
Mother, in thine arms enfold
This your child, Erotion,
Gone to seek you, all alone.

The threshold of the nether night,
Spectral shapes that darkly loom,
Will else her tender footsteps fright,
Trembling toward you thro' the gloom:
From the dreadful hound of hell,
Triple horror, shield her well.

So you: while I, abiding here,
Orphaned of my heart's delight,
A little stone will raise to her,
'Neath her name in marble write:
'Light lie on her, earth, for she
Heavy step ne'er laid on thee.'"

When her young life fell before thee,
Cut by Fate's untimely shears,
Sore the tide of grief swept o'er thee,
Poet, in warm, human tears
Shed in elegies of woe,
Eighteen hundred years ago.

Where rests she now? Do maize and vine
Keep the secret where she lies,
On Tuscan slope, or Apennine,
'Neath the soft Italian skies;
Till the plough-share bid the sun
Once more kiss—"Erotion"?

These musings by my study fire
  Children twain, with sudden glee,
Broke: with disappointment dire
  Saw you, Martial, on my knee;
Jealous, hid you, took your place,
Read forgiveness in my face.

Oft had we, the armchair filling,
  ("Sleepy Hollow" it we call,)
Revelled in adventures thrilling,
  Elf and ogre, prince and thrall!
But to-night to them I read
Of the poet's darling, dead.

Then the children—roguish laughter
  Softened now to sober smile—
Seemed my thoughts to guess; and, after
  Wondering for a little while,
Asked, with grave enquiring brow,
"Where's the little slave-girl now?"

"Ask me, children, in what far land
  Ripened this your Christmas cheer:
May be, the rich purple garland
  Of grape clusters, lying here,
Bowed the vines whose tendrils wave
Gently o'er Erotion's grave."

"*Sinite parvulos ad me venire: talium est enim regnum cœlorum.*"

S. Matt. xix., 14.

Christmas, 1896.

THE TUMBLING MONK OF CLAIRVAUX.

"*Dex ne demande or ne argent*
Fors vraie amor en cuer de gent."

LE TOMBEUR NOTRE-DAME.

PROEM.

THE Middle Ages, and particularly the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, produced a large number of tales in verse known as "Fabliaux," including stories of miracles of the Virgin and the Saints, called "Contes Pieux." Many of these were versified by GAUTIER DE COINCI *(b. 1177, d. 1236), a Benedictine monk of Saint-Médard de Soissons, afterwards prior of Vic-sur-Aisne, from a compilation in Latin by Hugues Farsit. Gautier's collection runs to about 30,000 verses. His versification is rich; and, though he indulges too often in plays upon words and verbal jingles, that are both tiring and absurd, you often meet with a striking and charming naïveté, a tenderness and simplicity of heart, that touches you, while it makes you smile.*

*Of all the tales in Gautier's collection—"là où sont bonnes les matières"—none has more charm than "*LE TOMBEUR NOTRE-DAME."—*A jongleur acrobat, weary of the world, where "il alla tant et tant revint en tant maint lieu," forsakes all and enters the Abbey of Clairvaux, ignorant of even the "Paternoster," "Credo," and "Ave Maria." In despair he offers before Our Lady's altar his finest tumbling feats. As he falls fainting before her shrine, the Virgin is seen to descend with a company of angels, and to wipe the sweat from his brow.*

Though this exquisite poem first saw the light in the Dark Ages—when it was still largely true, as an old Greek poet

sings of the Golden Age, that "the meadow of poesy was still unmown,"—it has never before, so far as I know, been seen in a setting of English rhyme. If therefore, any candid friend should take me to task on the score that the motif of our Christmas greeting this year is an old one, and feel inclined to cry "non sua poma," I hope this excuse may stand me in good stead; for, if these fruits be not, indeed, my very own, I can only say that there is now nothing new under the sun—not even in fruit—at Christmas-time.

The following version of the legend does not pretend to be even a paraphrase, much less a translation of Gautier's somewhat lengthy poem, though, here and there, a phrase is echoed. The motif alone is borrowed, by freely adapting, rather than adopting; indeed, the liberty has been taken of departing not a little from the story as told by him. These verses claim to be no more than a humble attempt to render an impression of its flavour and spirit, with something of the ballad-like directness and simplicity of the original.

THE TUMBLING MONK OF CLAIRVAUX.

"I tore this weed from the rank, dark soil
Where it grew in the monkish time;
I trimmed it close, and set it again
In a border of modern rhyme."

"THE MONKS OF BASLE."—COL. JOHN HAY.

The founding of the Abbey.

BUILDED by the good Saint Bernard
Seven long centuries ago,
In a deep and wooded valley
Rose the abbey of Clairvaux.

Leagues of Christmas snow untrodden
Lay around the convent walls;
O'er the winding forest pathways
Beech and pine hung icy palls.

A jongleur turneth monk.

Thither came a youthful jongleur,
Tired of worldly gauds was he;
Craved he entrance as a novice—
Mountebank a monk would be.

Doffing there his brave apparel,
Stripped of all his earthly store,
Horse and purse, he entered naked
Thro' the monastery door.

Knowing naught of godly learning

Naught he knew of holy learning,
Ne'er o'er missal had he bent,
Jesting, dancing, tumbling, turning,
Were his sole accomplishment.

Lived and spake by signs the brethren,
Save when penitential psalm,
Canticle, or Miserere,
Broke upon their cloistered calm.

or holy offices

Sad he saw each in his office
Serving God by day and night—
All but he—priest, deacon, abbot,
And the humblest acolyte.

"Ave," "Credo," "Paternoster"—
Mysteries all; and like a knell
Rang upon his ears unlearnèd
Matins, nones, and compline bell.

He bewaileth his sorry case

Till, one eve, at vespers kneeling
Heart-sore, eager to be whole,
To Our Lady in her chapel
Forth he poured his inmost soul.

"I, unprofitable servant,
Ill deserve my daily meat;
Hardly worthy of the fragments
That the very dogs do eat.

"I am but a barren vessel,
Foolish thing of turns and twists!
O, how can serve thy sanctity
Lissom ankles, supple wrists?

to the Blessed Virgin

"Yet I bring thee here my service,
Gentle Mary, Mother mild;
Wilt thou graciously my offering
Take, as from a little child?"

Flinging back his monkish habit,
Leaped he from the altar stair,
Deftly threw, with strange gyrations,
Featly somersaults in air.

with unwonted devotions

Faster, faster yet, and faster,
Head now uppermost, now heel,
Legs and arms became the living
Spokes of a revolving wheel.

to the scandal of the brethren

Guttered fast the waxen tapers,
From the altar rolled the pyx,
And the silver lamp, set swinging,
Struck the holy crucifix.

Then his mad fantastic turning
Slackened to a dizzy dance,
Till he, fainting, lay extended
Spent and prone, in fevered trance.

Gazed the monks in mute amazement,
Cried the abbot in despair :—
"Shall this madman monk unhindered
Desecrate our house of prayer?

"Cast the caitiff from the precinct!
God and Saints!"—he wildly calls—
"Our Lady now will bring, full surely,
Round our ears our abbey walls!"

A miracle

Lo! the chapel's vaulted roofing,
Parting to the frosty skies,
Shows a company of Angels
With the Saints in Paradise.

Our Lady succoureth

From whose midst the Queen of Heaven,
Fairer than the sun or moon,
In an incense-cloud descending
Where the novice lay in swoon,

Robed in glorious wise, down-bending,
While her train before her bow,
With a veil of wondrous whiteness
Wipes the sweat from off his brow.

and solaceth him.

Then, in sweetest tone of blessing :—
"Thou hast done it unto me,
Here on earth ; in highest heaven
Thou my minister shalt be."

As the glorious vision faded,
Round the waking monk there spread
Heavenly radiance, and a nimbus
Saintly circled o'er his head.

* * * * * *

Here followeth the lesson.

Thus the abbot and his brethren
Learned, when gifts of love are given,
That 'tis not the gift, but giving,
Findeth favour most in heaven.

Christmas, 1897.

"*Jesus autem dixit: 'Sinite eam, quid illi molesti estis? Bonum opus operata est in me. Quod habuit haec, fecit: et, quod fecit haec, narrabitur in memoriam eius.'*"

S. Marc. xiv. 6-9.

"*Apparuit autem illi Angelus de coelo, confortans eum . . . . . Et factus est sudor eius, sicut guttae sanguinis decurrentis in terram.*"

S. Luc. xxii. 43.

"*Et ecce angeli accesserunt, et ministrabant ei.*"

S. Matt. iv. 11.

LE TOMBEOR NOTRE-DAME.

(The following short extracts from this long poem are appended as specimens of its style and language.)

Chevals et robes et monoie
Et quanqu'il ot, trestot i mist.

. . . .

Car n'ot vescu fors de tumer,
Et d'espringier et de baler:
Treper, saillir, ice savoit,
Ne d'autre rien il ne savoit,
Car ne savoit autre leçon,
Ne 'Pater noster,' ne chançon,
Ne le 'Credo,' ne le salu,
Ne rien qui fust a son salu.

. . . .

Cascuns servoit Deu cha et la
De tel office con il a.

. . . .

" *Sainte Marie, fait-il, mère!*

. . . .

" *Si que jo puisse deservir*
Les viandes que chaens preng
Car jo sai bien que jo mespreng.

. . . .

" *Qui ne faz ci fors que broster*
Et viandes por nient gaster.

. . . .

" *Li autre servent de canter,*
Et jo servirai de tumer."
Sa cape oste, si se despoille;
Delés l'autel met sa despoille.

. . . .

Devers l'ymage se retorne
Mout humblement, et si l'esgarde.

" *Douce roïne, douce dame,*
Ne despisiés ce que jo sai,
Car jo me voil mètre à l'asai
De vos servir en boue foi,
Se Dex m'aït, sans nul desroi."

. . . .

Lors li commence a faire saus
Bas et petis et grans et haus,
Primes deseur et puis desos.

. . . .

" *Dame, fait-il, je vous aore*
Del cuer, del cors, des piés, des mains,
Car jo ne sai ne plus ne mains."

. . . .

L'abes esgarde sans atendre
Et vit de la volte descendre
Une dame si glorïouse,
Ainc nus ne vit si preciouse,
Ne si ricement conreée,
N'onques tant bèle ne fut née:
Ses vesteüres sont bien chiéres
D'or et de preciouses piéres
Avoec lui estoient li angle
Del ciel amont et li arcangle,
Qui entor le menestrel viénent,
Si le solacent et sostiénent.

. . . .

Et la douce roïne france
Tenoit une touaille blance,
S'en avente son menestrel
Mout doucement devant l'autel.
La france dame deboinaire
Le col, le cors et le viaire
Li avente por refroidier
Bien s'entremet de lui aidier.
La dame bien s'i abandone;
Li bons hom garde ne s'en done,
Car il ne voit, si ne sét mie
Qu'il ait si bèle compaignie.

. . . .

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SCRIP AND SCRIPPAGE.

"I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke . . . . ."

POPE.

"Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques."

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER.

BALLADE, rondeau,—of what avail
"La grace exquise des choses si frêles"?
Adown Time's stream unheeded go
Queen Marguerite, Villon, Marot,
Fame-sped no more by fav'ring gale.

Old France's modish measures fail,
Like last year's nest, like summer hail,
Like folk that wove them long ago,
Ballade, rondeau.

Yet, undeterr'd, this idle show
Of vagrant rhyme we offer you—
Friends all—in stead of Christmas tale,
Ballade, rondeau.

TO MY WIFE.

"*Te spectem, suprema mihi quum venerit hora,*
Te teneam moriens deficiente manu."

TIBULLUS, I. i. 59.

"*ON Lethe Wharf*": *may we withstand*
The call to that unwelcome strand?
Nay, Death's inexorable decree
Must one day, love, part you and me;
Yet keep us his, his at command.

No larger boon will I demand,
Though memory fail like slipping sand,
And like a pale ghost from me flee
On Lethe Wharf;

If but the pressure of thy hand
Linger in mine in that dim land,
And thy dear smile remembered be,
And some fond memory of thee
Stay with me, when I come to stand
On Lethe Wharf.

BALLADE OF MAISTRE FRANCOYS RABELAIS.

"*Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.*"
BROWNING: "GARDEN FANCIES."

COME down, old friend: too long you've lain
On yon high shelf. You're dusty? Phew!
"*Certes*"—I hear you answer plain—
"A judgment for neglect, *pardieu!*"
Ne'er fear, you'll always get your due,
Tho' times go not the easy way
When lusty clerics gave the cue;
Eh? Master François Rabelais?

Fair abbey gardens of Touraine
Long spoil'd, bloom in your page anew;
Old France unrolls her wide champaign
For great Gargantua's jovial crew,
Sly Panurge, Pantagruel too,
And proud Thelema's mad array;
Their legend—"What thou Wilt, that Doe"—
Yours, Master François Rabelais.

And tho' you seek your shelf again,
  Happier with dusty tomes than new,
Know this: whate'er new lights may reign,
  You'll find fit company tho' few.
  Tho' prudes with pain your volumes view,
Whate'er folk unco' guid may say,
  The world will have its laughter through
With Master François Rabelais.

ENVOY.

Doctor, Franciscan, tho' 'tis true
  Bookmen have all, like dogs, their day;
Long lease of life belongs to you,
  Good Master François Rabelais.

PALIMPSEST.

AS one who pores o'er parchment missal sees
The monkish canticle or prayer o'erflow
Faint lines long-blurred; and mayhap finds below
The wine of sacred utterance lewd lees—

Some ribald line of Aristophanes,
None but the scholar's critic eye could know,
Or e'er decipher from the folio
Yellow with cankering stain of centuries:

So, deep within the whitest soul, that shows
Without a blemish in the public eye,
An undercurrent of base memory flows,
Tainting the pure thought and the purpose high;

And in delirious dream, or restless sleep,
That whitest soul its secret may not keep.

INSOMNIA.

SLEEP flies me still: in vain I go
Thro' meads where slumb'rous poppies bright
Wave, and smooth rivers darkly flow—
Sleep flies me still.

I hate the moonbeam's feeble light;
The dwindling taper's dull red glow
Burns to the brain, offends the sight.

Tho' fast my flitting fancies throw
Dream-bridges o'er the gulfs of night,
Like shuttles crossing to and fro—
Sleep flies me still.

SUCCINCTI ET CALCEATI.

"The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is—the unlit lamp, and the ungirt loin."
BROWNING.

GIRDED and shod; when spirit-sore,
And faint the heart that sang before;
When dreams of easeful hours are sweet,
And duty's call is hard to meet,
And joy is failing at the core;

When hope's spent wing forgets to soar,
And courage falters more and more—
Then smiling go the strife to greet,
Girded and shod.

When Death comes knocking at the door
Of Life, to say the play is o'er,
And festal lights die in the street—
Then face the dark, with loins and feet
Girded and shod.

MOTHERLESS.

TWO children claimed her love: one, hers,
Her larger heart did share;
The other knew in other years
Another mother's care.

This down the stair with eager feet
Ran bed-time kiss to win:
With hope the little heart did beat—
"O, please may I come in?"

"My dearest, is it you?" she cried.—
Ah, God! that it should be!—
The quivering little lips replied,
"No, Mother, only me."

REVELASTI EA PARVULIS.

GOD closed her little lesson-book of life—
And gently set her there
In His serener air
Among His children, far from this our strife;
Where with unwondering eyes
She reads all mysteries,
Grown sudden wiser than earth's wisest wise.

ON A MOUNTAIN CONTAINING GOLD.

"Quam ampla sunt opera tua, Domine! quam plena est terra possessione tua!"

PSALM civ. 24.

A DOUBLE gift is thine—one, bought and sold;
The other free, a simple boon but blest;
The Hand that filled thy secret veins with gold
Hath set the violets on thine open breast.

LACUSTRIA.

AN ESSAY IN ETYMOLOGY.

NAPES Needle! Ever pointing high
In rolling mist or azure sky
Tall, tantalizing, tapery;
Could'st thou thy name's hid secret tell,
Would'st say: "Ere days of inch or ell
I sewed the vesture of the fell,
And broidered Nature's napery"?

BY ULLSWATER.

O TRAVELLER, thou wilt never meet,
Tho' wandering up and down,
Two places less like town and street
Than High Street and How Town.

IN BORROWDALE.

WITH knapsack, not with rod and line,
I came to Rosthwaite inn;
But driving mist, and drizzle fine,
Have kept me close within.

I seek my solace in a book,
And in the thought—belike
The deftest angler may not hook
Eel Crags and Scafell Pike!

BLENCATHARA.

BLENCATHARA of the ancient days,
The ancient awe we lack:
With dull irreverence of phrase
Men call thee—Saddleback!

TO AUSTIN DOBSON.

After reading "A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL.'

> *"He lived in that past Georgian day,*
> *When men were less inclined to say*
> *That 'Time is Gold,' and overlay*
> *With toil their pleasure."*

NO Golden Age is ours, tho' "Time is Gold":
Life's weightier matters men to-day pursue;
Prone to forget—unlike their sires of old—
The mint and cummin, anise, and the rue.

"Glissez, mortel, n'appuyez pas": not all
Of earthly wisdom lies in cloisters bare:
Tho' pedants stiffly sit in Learning's stall,
Some lore will haunt the Muses' easy chair.

Tho' no heroics occupy thy pen,
Nor problems vex with metaphysic strife,
No trifler thou; for thou hast taught to men
The worth of trifles in the art of life.

Christmas, 1898.

THE CHILDREN'S PARADISE.

THE CHILDREN'S PARADISE.*

TO MY CHILDREN.

"And when your prayers complete the day,
Darlings, your little tiny hands
Were also made, I think, to pray
For men who lose their fairy-lands."
H.B. IN "THE BAD CHILD'S BOOK OF BEASTS."

THERE is a land I know of,
Behind the moon and sun:
Instead of bread and butter there,
You've always cake and bun.

You help yourself at tea-time,
And are not told to stop;
And if you drop your bread and jam,
The right side comes up top.

The pictures all are coloured,
And swords are not of wood;
The toys get never broken, and
The dolls are always good.

* This Poem, quaintly illustrated, was sent out with the last Christmas Message as an additional greeting from Dr. Rogers's Children.

Rabbits have eyes, not buttons;
Nor lose their squeak and hair;
You slit your drum to look inside,
And find the music there.

Trains go by steam, not clockwork;
The dogs and cats can speak;
Children have parties every day,
And birthdays twice a week.

Fox terriers have no muzzles,
But never, never, bite;
The pussies don't take walks abroad,
And lose themselves at night.

The dickies let you stroke them,
And put salt on their tails;
And every day the milk-man brings
Cream chocolates in pails.

The tops don't die in spinning;
No branches catch your kite;
The woods are made of Christmas trees
With candles lit at night.

The butterflies don't flutter
  Beyond the garden wall;
You catch bright bees in hollyhocks
  That never grow too tall.

And there the sunny garden
  Gets never dark and cold;
And nurses do not beckon you—
  "Come in when you are told."

There isn't any bed-time,
  Nor any sleepy eyes;
And so the fairies call the land
  The Children's Paradise.

Christmas, 1898.

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